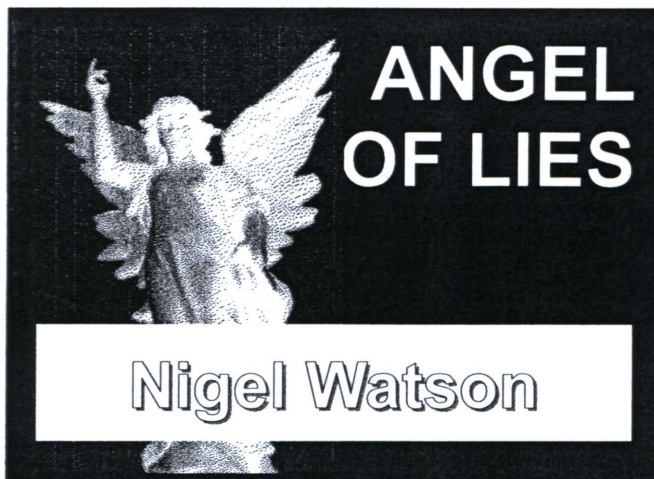


# MAGONIA Supplement

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THE LEGEND of the Angel of Mons became the focus of media attention in 2001 when it was announced in *The Sunday Times* (11 March 2001) that Marlon Brando and British film director Tony Kaye had paid £350,000 for film footage of the angel.(1)

It was claimed that Gloucestershire architect Danny Sullivan had bought the film from a Monmouth junk shop in August 1999 but he only viewed the film in September 2000. It had been found in a trunk of archives belonging to a West Countryman called William Doidge.

The story went that William Doidge had been at Mons in August 1914 and knew about (possibly saw?) the apparitions of angels in the sky as the British Army retreated from the overwhelming German advance. After the war he became obsessed by these apparitions which he thought could put him into contact with his sweetheart who went missing during the war. An American war veteran told him in 1952 that angels had appeared before some American troops were drowned during an exercise in 1944 at Woodchester Park in the Cotswolds. Armed with this information Doidge went there with his camera and lay in wait until he captured images of them.

Tony Kaye was quoted as saying:

"I want to include Doidge's footage of the apparition at the heart of the movie. It will be a spine-tingling moment. This is the closest we have on film to proof of an angel. I've spent much of my life looking at special visual effects, and this is an effect for which I have no explanation."

Marlon Brando planned to play the part of the American war veteran.

More can be found out about this story on The Doidge's Angel Homepage (2) which is produced by Danny Sullivan. He adds that in Harold Begbie's book *On The Side of the Angels* there is reference to a soldier referred to as "BD" who saw the Angel of Mons and

could have been William (Bill) Doidge. More significantly, Sullivan notes that in 1990 he studied the history and folklore surrounding Woodchester Park and the unfinished Gothic Woodchester Mansion, which resulted in him publishing a book on the subject entitled *The House of the Holy Spirit*.

The whole story gets more complicated if you look at the Oval Soap website's diary of the Cannes 2001 film festival (

Oval Soap is now defunct and replaced by the equally bizarre Liquid Soap website). Here Tony Kaye is seen promoting several projects including his Angel of Mons film. His style is, let us say, direct:

"... Tony Kaye, all round movie-maker-actor-rock-legend-in-the-making head butted me, then rammed his arm in my face to show off a new Hebrew 'Angel' tattoo, which he's got in honor (sic) of his soon to be started, completed, edited or scripted film (probably), *The Angel of Mons*. He left and strapped some sofas to a truck for a mobile press conference."

The Oval Soap diary entry for 17 May 2001 provides some further information about the film:

"A guy called Macarthy appeared at Woodchester Mansion in Gloucester, to take some film footage for Marlon Brando, who's tipped to play a part in Tony's movie about the angel sighting at the place in 1940, which we heard about from a hairy guy called Danny Williams (this should be Sullivan - N.W.), an architect in Stroud who looks like an ex-member of ZZ Top and writes about Ley Lines in his spare time. On the Marlon front, he was slated to fly out to avoid Tony's gig, but did say he planned to surprise Tony and expressed an interest in playing the tom-toms with the band, so he might not be flying out at all." (3)

An interview with Tony Kaye is preceded by this evaluation of him:

"Depending on who you ask, Tony Kaye is either a visionary artist on a fearless crusade against Hollywood's dumbed-down, assembly-line approach to filmmaking, or a reckless, manipulative self-promoter creating a messy public spectacle of his own career immolation. The irrepressible id of every dissatisfied filmmaker in Tinseltown, or the moralistic superego of a business gone mad." (4)

Tony has been most successful directing TV commercials. His feature film credits

include *American History X* (1998) and *Snowblind* (2002). On 11 September 2002 it was reported that he and Marlon Brando had fallen out. Kaye claimed that Brando had tried to attack him and that afterwards he got intimidating messages from him. Kaye said:

"I had one strange call on my answering machine. The voice sounded like the Devil. He said, 'I'm in your house. I'm going to kill you.' I was so frightened I didn't go back to my house for a couple of weeks. I went to the police with the tapes. They treated it as a joke."

The argument was over the videoing of a documentary by Kaye called *Conversations With Brando* that includes Brando conducting acting lessons in drag or wearing a priest's outfit. On 23 October 2002 it was announced that Brando does not want the documentary released and is thinking of suing Kaye.

So if the Angel film is put into production it is evident it will no longer feature Brando!

After all this hype and speculation the whole project hit the deck on Tuesday, 15 October 2002, when BBC Radio 4 broadcast a programme about the Angel of Mons. In a casual conversation with the presenter, Danny Sullivan admitted that the story was a hoax. His motive was to gain income and publicity for Woodchester Park, since his book on the subject *The House of the Holy Spirit* had not sold well. On reflection this still leaves us with many questions. Was there really a person called William Doidge? Was there any film footage and did he sell it to Tony Kaye, or is Kaye in on it? If he did sell it to Tony Kaye, Sullivan must know that he'll be sued (Kaye has never been slow to enter litigation). Or is this a case of more hype?

## Back to basics

Without the help of Danny Sullivan et al. the original story of the Angel of Mons is convoluted enough. For a start not every 'witness' saw angels; other accounts mention 'horsemen in armour', St George on a white horse, St Joan, St Michael, a strange cloud and bowmen.

The Battle of Mons, which consisted of the British Expeditionary Force's first encounter with the German army, took place on 22 August 1914. They were able to slow down the German advance but they had to retreat at the cost of at least 1,600 men.

This was reported in sensational fashion in the British press and it shocked the nation. In response Arthur Machen wrote a story 'The Bowmen', which can be found at the Aftermath World War 1 website. (5) Machen's introduction to his 1915 book on the subject

*The Angel of Mons: The Bowmen and Other Legends of the War*, is also reproduced there.

(6) The Australian War Memorial website quotes from Harold Begbie's book *On The Side of the Angels* but is sceptical about any supernatural intervention. However, it's not all gloom for the believers as they concede that:

"Whether or not the Germans were terrified by the apparition the fact remains that the enemy forces abruptly checked their advance and recoiled in some disorder towards the right flank allowing the remnant of the British forces to continue their retreat."(7)

David Clarke in his new study of the Angel of Mons - 'Rumours of Angels: A Legend of the First World War' (8) attempts to show how and why it evolved into such a potent legend of supernatural aid in the midst of bloody combat.

He carefully puts the story into its socio-historical context and shows how 'believers' used Machen's original story of The Bowmen as the framework to circulate 'true' stories of angelic or ghostly intervention on behalf of Britain and its allies. As Clarke puts it:

"The artistic talents of Arthur Machen had combined with the power of the media to create a rumour of angels that appealed to a deep well of belief and tradition invoked in

times of national crisis."

On the *Magonia* website is Kevin McClure's comprehensive survey of this story 'Visions of Bowmen and Angels'. (9)

He supports the idea that angels might well have been 'seen' due to the effects of extreme fatigue causing hallucinatory visions but acknowledges that "... responses to the Mons material will continue to vary ..."

#### Conclusion

The legend of the Angel of Mons covers a broad range of visions that were usually reported on a second- or third-hand basis. The motive for circulating such stories and for believing in them was to 'prove' that some Christian or spiritual force was supporting the British against the evil German hordes.

In the case of the film footage found by Danny Sullivan, the impression is given that it shows the Angel of Mons (whatever that was). Beyond the headlines it is really supposed to be footage of an angelic vision shot many years later. Here the media have been used to promote a film project for the purpose of financial gain and entertainment rather than the deeper spiritual needs of the original legend.

Times change even for angels.

#### Notes

1. The original article is reproduced at: <http://www.100megsfree4.com/farshores/pmons.htm>.
2. (<http://www.doidgesangel.com/>)
3. ([http://www.borkowski.co.uk/ovalsoap/140501\\_200501.html](http://www.borkowski.co.uk/ovalsoap/140501_200501.html))
4. (<http://www.fadeinmag.com/kaye/interview1.html>)
5. (<http://www.aftermathww1.com/bowmen.asp>).
6. (<http://www.aftermathww1.com/bowmint1.asp>).
7. ([http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/angel\\_doc.htm](http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/angel_doc.htm)).
8. *Folklore*, 113, 2002, pp. 151-173) An off-print of this research article can be obtained from David Clarke. For details email him at: [cd292@crazydiamonds.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:cd292@crazydiamonds.fsnet.co.uk). David Clarke will be talking more about the Angel of Mons at the Fortean Times Unconvention, 12 to 13 April 2003. For details visit: <http://www.unconvention2003.com/html%20pages/visitors/v-speakers.htm>
9. (<http://www.magonia.demon.co.uk/abwatch/stars/bowmen.html>).

For an intelligent look at film and television visit: <http://www.talkingpix.co.uk>

## TRINDADE

### Gentle Reminder No. 1

In our previous issue we revealed that Jerome Clark had announced that new evidence would soon become available which would prove that the Trindade photographs were definitely not a hoax.

So far the promised evidence has not been forthcoming. We realise that Jerome Clark is a busy man and that this is perhaps not his most urgent priority at present, so we issue this first and, we hope, last reminder in case it has slipped his mind.

## MAGONIA Readers' Meetings



"YOU SHOULD TRY THE MAGONIA READERS' MEETINGS THEY'RE ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH FROM 7.15 TO 10.30 P.M. AT THE RAILWAY OPPOSITE PUTNEY STATION THEY HAVE REAL ALE THERE AND FOOD AND THE PRICES ARE VERY REASONABLE I'M SURE YOU'LL ENJOY ARGUING WITH THE MAGONIA PELICANISTS I'VE BEEN THERE ONCE OR TWICE MYSELF BUT I COULD HARDLY GET A WORD IN EDGWAYS ..."



# TESTING FOR A HOAX

Gareth J. Medway

ATTITUDES to lie detector tests in the UFO literature have always been ambiguous. For instance in *Science: Good, Bad and Bogus*, Martin Gardner rejects the testimony of one UFO witness on the grounds that he failed a lie detector test. Later on in the same book he mentions that another UFO witness passed a lie detector test, but says that this means nothing, as lie detector tests are notoriously unreliable.

Travis Walton took two lie detector tests, one of which he failed, and one of which he passed. The reaction of Phil Klass to this is not too unexpected: the one which he failed was administered by the most skilled lie detector operator in Arizona, considers Klass, but the one he passed was done by a bumbling amateur who should never have been allowed to practise. Those who believe Walton's story take exactly the opposite view of these two men's qualifications.

There is an old joke that politicians use statistics "as a drunken man uses a lamp post: for support rather than illumination". Clearly, the same is true of ufologists and lie detector tests. But they may at least reveal something.

Normally, the subject of the test will be asked to affirm the truth of some such statement as "I was sitting at home watching television when the crime was committed." In Walton's case, he was asked if he had had a frightening experience, and he immediately showed signs of fear. This, surely, is what you would expect if he had been telling the truth.

It is otherwise with his fellow lumberjacks, who took lie detector tests to affirm that they had seen him zapped by a ray of energy from a UFO. Five of them passed, and the results of the sixth test were ambiguous. This last makes it a bit awkward to assess the probabilities involved, so for simplicity I shall ignore the uncertain result.

The vital point is, it is rather surprising that five men should all pass the test if all were lying. Suppose that giving a man a lie detector test is actually no different from tossing a coin. If so, then there was only a 1 in 32 chance that all would have passed.

Critics of lie detector tests do, however, allow them *some* efficacy, but say that they are only accurate perhaps four times out of five. This would make any individual test useless, but not collective tests. The chances of five liars all passing would then be less than 1 in 3,000. The one "uncertain" result lowers this probability a bit (it is difficult to say precisely

by how much), but not a great deal. In other words, it is very unlikely that there was a conspiracy of all the men to invent a non-existent abduction, and little weight can be given to this suggestion.

All of this illustrates a more general observation: that ufologists do not tend to distinguish suspected hoaxes from proven hoaxes, though I would have thought that the difference could be crucial.

Here is another example: the MJ-12 papers would, if genuine, prove that an alien spacecraft crashed at Roswell in 1947. For a variety of reasons I feel certain that a spacecraft did not crash at Roswell in 1947, from which I infer that the MJ-12 papers are a hoax. I do not, however, know of any conclusive evidence *from the documents themselves* proving them to be a hoax. There are a number of suspicious features: for instance, the dead ufonauts are described as "Extra-terrestrial Biological Entities", though the *Oxford English Dictionary* does not note the term "extraterrestrial" as applied to an alien life-form until 1966. This is not, however, a definite proof, particularly since the term may well have been used in America earlier than in Britain. According to Stanton Friedman, Phil Klass told him that the alleged Cutler-Twining memorandum was in pica, and said that the White House then only used elite type. If, Klass offered, Friedman could produce any contemporary White House documents in pica he would pay him \$100 each for them, up to a limit of \$1,000. Friedman promptly produced twenty, and duly received \$1,000. This is a cautionary tale for those who think questionable features are proof of a hoax. Does anyone have any *definite* reason for rejecting some or all of the MJ-12 documents?

There is one point which might be a useful starting point for investigation: the Cutler-Twining memorandum was "found" in a box of newly declassified files. If it was a fake, it could only have been inserted by the men who claimed to have discovered it, Bill Moore and Jaime Shandera. Friedman's favourite argument is that the MJ-12 documents were confirmed by his previous researches, which were known to only a handful of people – including Bill Moore and Jaime Shandera. Unfortunately, pursuing this line of thought further is likely to earn the attention of m'learned friends.

## EDITORIAL

The *Merseyside UFO Bulletin*, which later became *MUFOB* and was eventually renamed *Magonia*, first appeared in February 1968, so the editors are now celebrating 35 glorious years of publication.

We have seen many similar publications start and quickly fade away. There were a number of reasons for these failures and one of the commonest was that publishers were more concerned with the appearance than with the content of their magazines. Thus we had, and still have, professionally designed glossy publications full of professionally copy-edited nonsense. Such magazines inevitably fail unless they are among the very few which are carefully and competently targeted at a mass readership.

*Magonia* has survived by being careful never to incur debts. It has also followed a fairly consistent editorial policy of encouraging serious research and theoretical studies, and never publishing dubious claims without critical comment.

As *Magonia* is not a formal organisation it does not get bogged down in administrative details. We provide a quarterly subscription magazine, an informative and interesting website which is frequently updated, and this *Supplement*, which is published irregularly but frequently on the website, together with a small number of printed copies. We also hold informal monthly meetings which anyone who is interested is welcome to attend.

All this is achieved without spending money we haven't got, holding interminable committee meetings, making pathetic appeals for money, or whingeing about doing lots of hard work which no one appreciates.

# LITERARY CRITICISM – Reviews by Peter Rogerson

**Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self*, Oxford University Press, 2002. £19.99**

In this study of images of blending, shape shifting and splitting in European culture from Ovid to Lewis Carroll, Marina Warner dances close to the topics of interest to *Magonia*, but never quite engages with them. One gets the feeling that she remains imprisoned in the cage of high culture and cannot escape into the world of the masses' imagination. The world of popular culture clearly inspired much of the high art here discussed, whether it is the hell of Dante or the earthly paradise of Hieronymous Bosch. Warner discusses the impact of the zombie on Coleridge, and its construction in modern form by Zora Houston (though William Seabrook got there before her). The zombie with its evocation of ambulatory coma or vegetative state, or the appalling absence of end-stage Alzheimer's, remains one of the most unsettling of images.

The idea of the doppelganger or the mystical second self hints at the splitting of identity. Ideas of splitting emerged in the Gothic but reached fruition in the Victorian period under the joint impact of the new psychology and the new technologies of image capture. One of those captivated by these themes was the fairy story writer and photographer Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll). Dodgson's imagination was stirred at the age of 9 by a museum display in Warrington Town Hall, one of the those cabinets of curiosities which would have delighted Jan Bondeson, full of weird birds and exotic artefacts. The museum becomes the realm of the imagination. Readers of this book will be surprised to learn that Dodgson in his later years formed a theory of alien encounters, that in addition to our normal consciousness of daylight reason and common sense, there are others "The Eerie" (in which, while conscious of actual surroundings [the percipient] is also conscious of the presence of fairies, and "form of trance in which, while unconscious of actual surroundings, and apparently, asleep he (i.e. his immaterial essence) migrates to other scenes in the actual world, or in Fairyland, and is conscious of the presence of Fairies". For fairies read "the other" or whatever token of the uncanny you please.

(If that surprises readers they will be astounded to learn that Dodgson who died in 1898 was among the collectors who was delighted with the purchase of a copy of one of the Cottingley fairy photographs, taken in



1917. Was this through the mediumship of Mrs Leonard one wonders, or a judicious journey down the Daresbury time tunnel, or is that a good entry for the howler of the year competition?)

**Michael W Cuneo, *American Exorcism: Expelling Demons in the Land of Plenty*, Bantam Books, 2002. £6.99**

An account of Cuneo's encounters as an "investigative sociologist" and observer among both Protestant and Catholic exorcists in the USA. Cuneo argues that the exorcism industry has grown into the mainstream of American culture, from a nearly forgotten backwater, following the publicity surrounding the film *The Exorcist*. The film and subsequent best-selling books such as Malachi Martin's semi-pornographic *Hostage to the Devil* constructed images of what possession means and how it can be dealt with. Exorcism ministries grew up in a variety of charismatic, evangelical and theologically conservative groups across the United States.

In his searches Cuneo never actually comes across the sort of dramatic events he hears about, such as levitations and heads turning 180 degrees, though there is one occasion where everyone else present swears such a levitation takes place, but Cuneo sees nothing. One of the more rational Catholic exorcists having "seen" such a levitation himself, now thinks that in some sense his senses were enchanted, and not by demons.

Those coming for exorcism suffer usually from a variety of anxieties; some would no doubt be diagnosed as suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder and others from depressions of various severities. Others just seem to have normal human problems. Indeed the main problem is their quite natural inability to achieve the impossible perfectionist demands of their sub-culture. In this, though it looks traditional, modern day exorcism is very much an integral part of the contemporary therapeutic culture, with its presentation of everyone as a victim (it's not

me guv, it's the demons), and its own perfectionism. The exorcists summon up dozens of demons to account for every human situation; the psychiatrists have ranges of diagnoses for an equal number of ordinary human situations. Behind both lies a perfectionism in which happiness is not just guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence but mandatory, and if you are not permanently happy and satisfied you have a problem which needs professional help to solve.

If there is a lacuna in this book, it is perhaps the lack of attention to the deeper sociological causes of the exorcism movement. *The Exorcist* was surely a child of its times; it is no coincidence that its "victim" is a teenage girl who violates the community's sense of appropriate behaviour; she is sexually aggressive, foul mouthed and dirty, all phenomena of the 1960s youth rebellion. *The Exorcist* portrays the priest-hero (Cuneo's phrase) as defending traditional religious and social values against disturbing forces, of reinforcing the boundaries of culture against the wild things outside.

Cuneo shows how the image of the priest hero was attractive to many priests who found their traditional patriarchal role threatened by theological and social liberalism. In the Protestant exorcism groups, there is the equal suspicion that what is really being exorcised is secular modernity itself.

More could have been made of the very high profile of women in many of these groups, as both victims and "dissemblers of spirits". Women also have high profiles in possession cults in other cultures. As victims they can give vent to frustrations and aggressive tendencies repressed by the culture, and blame the demons. As sniffers out of spirits (yes many dissemblers claim to detect the possessed by their body odour) they can gain power and status in cultures where they are usually expected to be submissive to male authority.

As a good sociologist Cuneo won't pronounce as to whether "real" demons exist, though readers can form their own opinions. As to exorcism he is ambivalent; as a placebo it may often be of real therapeutic value, but its culture of passing the buck onto the demons and the quick fix solution make him uneasy.

*Magonia* readers will find many of his insights into the role of popular culture in the promotion of "deep" beliefs and experiences, and in world view and perception building, applicable across a range of topics.